DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 211 573 TM 810 920

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TITLE Brilliant but Cruel: Perceptions of Negative Evaluators.
PUB DATE Apr 81
NOTE 28p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association (New York, NY, April, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Attribution Theory; Book Reviews; *Evaluators; Experimenter Characteristics; Higher Education; *Negative Attitudes; Social Cognition
IDENTIFIERS *Evaluator Characteristics; Evaluator Credibility

ABSTRACT

Two studies examined the hypothesis that negative evaluators will be perceived as more intelligent than positive evalutors. Two types of stimuli were used: excerpts from actual negative and positive book reviews, and versions of those excerpts that were edited so that the balance of the reviews varied but the content did not. The results strongly supported the hypothesis. Negative reviewers were perceived as more intelligent, competent, and expert than positive reviewers, even when the content of the positive review was independently judged as being of higher quality and greater forcefulness. At the same time, in accord with previous research, negative reviewers were perceived as significantly less likeable than positive reviewers. The results on intelligence ratings are seen as bolstering the self-presentational explanation of the tendency shown by intellectually insecure individuals to be negatively critical. The present methodology is contrasted to that of previous research which obtained apparently contradictory results. The phenomenon demonstrated here is explained in terms of implicational schemata. (Author)

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June 1981

ED211573

Brilliant but Cruel:
Perceptions of Negative Evaluators

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Portions of this paper were presented at the annual meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association, New York, April 1981.

The author wishes to thank David Schlesinger for his invaluable assistance in planning and conducting Study 2, Nancy Lubell for her assistance in conducting Study 1 and in analyzing the data, and William DeJong for his helpful comments on an earlier version of this manuscript.

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Running head: Negative Evaluators

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Abstract

Two studies examined the hypothesis that negative evaluators will be perceived as more intelligent than positive evaluators. Two types of stimuli were used: excerpts from actual negative and positive book reviews, and versions of those excerpts that were edited so that the valence of the reviews varied but the content did not. The results strongly supported the hypothesis. Negative reviewers were perceived as more intelligent, competent, and expert than positive reviewers, even when the content of the positive review was independently judged as being of higher quality and greater forcefulness. At the same time, in accord with previous research, negative reviewers were perceived as significantly less likeable than positive reviewers. The results on intelligence ratings are seen as bolstering the self-presentational explanation of the tendency shown by intellectually insecure individuals to be negatively critical. The present methodology is contrasted to that of previous research which obtained apparently contradictory results. The phenomenon demonstrated here is explained in terms of implicational schemata.

Brilliant but Cruel:

Perceptions of Negative Evaluators

> Only pessimism sounds profound.
>
> Optimism sounds superficial.
>
> (Blotnick, 1979, p. 229)

The observation that "only pessimism sounds profound" has been proposed as an explanation for the current popularity of negative prognostications on society's future (Blotnick, 1979): prophets of doom and gloom appear wise and insightful, while optimists are perceived as foolhearty and ignorant. If these intuitive observations are valid, they might actually identify only one form of a more general phenomenon; it might indeed be that negative statements are, in general, seen as intelligent while positive statements are seen as having a naive "Pollyanna" quality. Given the well-documented primacy of evaluation in human responses to a wide variety of stimuli (Frijda, 1969; Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957; Warr & Knapper, 1968; Zajonc, 1980), the impact of positive and negative evaluations on observers becomes an important issue.

Recent research (Amabile & Glazebrook, in press) has demonstrated a bias toward negativity in some interpersonal evaluations. When asked to evaluate other individuals or their work, subjects who believed their audience to be of higher intellectual status than themselves or who believed their intellectual position to be insecure exhibited a negativity bias. Compared to subjects who were secure or who had an equal-status audience, they were consistently more negative in their evaluations of stimulus persons' intellectual qualities.

A self-presentation mechanism was proposed as an explanation for this negativity bias. Individuals who have low status relative to the audience for their evaluation or who occupy unstable positions within a group may be

intellectually insecure. They may, in short, be concerned about the way in which their intellectual abilities are perceived. Thus, in an effort to preserve their self-esteem and their esteem in the eyes of observers, they may become negatively critical of the intelligence or the intellectual work of others.

This self-presentation explanation relies on the assumption that negative criticism is indeed perceived as more intelligent, incisive, and insightful than praise (or at least that people, as actors, believe that it is). There is, however, virtually no evidence on this issue. Aronson and Worchel (1966) found that people view negative evaluators more negatively than positive evaluators, when they themselves are the subject of those evaluations. But reciprocity is not an issue in the phenomenon proposed here; it is suggested that, when a third party is evaluated, an observer will view a negative evaluator as more intelligent than a positive evaluator.

In his classic experiments on person perception, Asch (1946) did obtain some indirect evidence suggesting that negative evaluators might be seen as more intelligent. Presented with lists of trait descriptors, subjects rated an "intelligent" and "polite" person as "wise" only 30% of the time, but rated an "intelligent" and "blunt" person as "wise" 50% of the time.

A more recent series of experiments, on the other hand, provides evidence that seems contradictory to the hypotheses presented here (Folkes & Sears, 1977). In those experiments, although the major focus was liking for negative and positive evaluators, subjects were asked to make ratings of both the likeability and the intelligence of several stimulus persons who gave a series of "like-dislike" judgments about a number of stimulus objects. It was found that when the stimulus objects were politicians, stimulus persons giving mixed positive and negative evaluations were perceived as more knowledgeable than those giving

more uniformly negative or positive evaluations. However, when the objects were cafeteria workers, movies, cities, and college courses, stimulus persons giving the most positive evaluations were regarded as most knowledgeable.

Before concluding that negative evaluations cannot be perceived as more intelligent than positive evaluations, however, it would seem wise to examine impressions based on evaluations that are somewhat more substantive than simple like-dislike judgments. Impressions of more substantive evaluations might be rather different from impressions of simple preference statements; moreover, evaluations of single stimulus objects might have a somewhat different impact from evaluations of a series of objects. Certainly, in everyday discourse, it is probably more common for an individual to give a somewhat detailed evaluation of a given object than to make a series of unelaborated like-dislike statements about a large number of objects.

The studies reported here represent a preliminary program designed to investigate the impact of relatively substantive evaluations of a single object (a book) on observers' judgments of the evaluators' intelligence and likeability. As a derivative of the self-presentation explanation of the negativity bias, it was hypothesized that although negative evaluators might be seen as less likeable than positive evaluators, they should at the same time be seen as more intelligent.

STUDY 1

In an effort to present subjects with negative and positive evaluations that were similar to those they might encounter in everyday life, excerpts were taken from two brief book reviews in the Sunday New York Times. In a within-subjects design, each subject read both reviews and then rated each reviewer on a number of dimensions.[1]

Method

Subjects

The subjects, 28 male and 27 female undergraduates, were approached on the campus of Brandeis University and asked to volunteer a few minutes of their time to complete a questionnaire for a psychology experiment. Virtually no potential subjects refused this request.

Materials

Two reviews of novels from the Sunday Times book review section were chosen. Both had been written by the same reviewer and both appeared in the same issue of the Times; thus, it seemed reasonable to assume that writing style and quality of writing were approximately equivalent in the two reviews. One of the reviews was extremely positive and one was extremely negative. The first paragraph of each review was edited so that the two were the same length, and a fictitious title and author were substituted so that it would appear that the two reviews had been written about the same book by two different reviewers:

> For a novel with its sights steadfastly set so low, "A Longer Dawn" by Alvin Harter is one of the more inexplicable novels I have come across in a long time. The characters are bizarre without being interesting. Their story is told without reason, without logic, without regard to time sequence or syntax. The book appears to have been typed at random.
>
> ---
>
> In 128 swift, brutal pages, Alvin Harter, with his first work of fiction, establishes himself as a

> significant young American author. "A Longer Dawn" is a novella -- a prose poem, if you will -- of tremendous impact. It deals with elemental stuff: life, love, and death, and does so with a savage intensity that crackles with excitement and superior writing on every page.

A two-page questionnaire was prepared for each subject. The first page began with a paragraph describing the study as one on impression formation. It stated that the two passages appearing on that page were excerpts of reviews that had been written by two senior editors at a book publishing company who were reviewing the same new novel. The instructions went on to state that on the basis of this limited information, the subject was to form an impression of the two reviewers. Measures of these impressions would be obtained on the rating scales appearing on the second page. The two reviewers were identified only as "R" and "S".[2]

Procedure

Only solitary students who appeared to be unhurried were approached and asked to participate (e.g., people sitting alone in the student union, people outdoors reading). Subjects were asked not to turn to the rating page until they had finished carefully reading both reviews. The rating page asked subjects to use continuous scales to rate the reviewers on each of eight different dimensions: literary expertise, intelligence, competence as an editor, kindness, career success, self-confidence, fairness, and likeability. Finally, subjects were asked whether they thought they would want to read the book, which review they guessed was more accurate, and which of the two reviewers they would guess was coming up for review by his superiors.

Results and Discussion

This study provided clear support for the hypothesis that negative reviewers would be perceived as brighter but less kind than positive reviewers. In a 2 x 2 analysis of variance with sex of subject as a between-subjects factor and valence of the review as a within-subjects factor, there was a main effect of valence on five of the eight variables: intelligence, F (1,53) = 4.89, $p < .05$; competence, F (1,53) = 4.72, $p < .05$; kindness, F (1,53) = 49.03, $p < .001$; fairness, F (1,53) = 20.16, $p < .001$; and likeability, F (1,52) = 35.48, $p < .001$. (See Table 1.)

Insert Table 1 about here

In addition, there was a trend for subjects to view the negative review as the more accurate of the two, χ^2 (1) = 3.25, $p < .07$. There were no main effects of subject sex on any of the variables, and no valence x sex interactions.

Despite the differences on ratings of intelligence, competence, kindness, fairness, and likeability, subjects did not rate the negative and positive reviewers differently on career success and self-confidence, nor did they guess that the negative reviewer was any more likely to be coming up for review himself. This suggests that if, as demonstrated by Amabile and Glazebrook (in press), insecure individuals are biased toward negativity in their evaluations, observers may be unaware of this bias.

Although Study 1 did appear to confirm the hypothesis quite strongly, there were several features of the methodology rendering this conclusion tentative. The most important of these was the attempt to use "real-world" stimuli. Despite efforts to control for style and quality of writing by choosing reviews

written by the same critic in the same week, it is possible that the quality of writing was higher in the negative review. Moreover, the forcefulness of the argument, the strength with which the reviewer's position was expressed, might have been higher in the negative review. These factors could have accounted for the more positive ratings of intelligence that were given to the negative reviewer.

In an effort to investigate these possibilities, a post-test was conducted in which 20 subjects were asked to rate one of the reviews on six continuous scales: overall quality of writing in the review, grammar and punctuation, organization of thoughts, forcefulness of the writing, strength of the reviewer's attitude toward the book, and, finally, the reviewer's attitude toward the book (from extremely negative to extremely positive).

Subjects' ratings of the two reviews revealed that the quality of writing was not perceived as equivalent but, surprisingly, it was the positive review that was rated more positively. The positive review received higher ratings on overall quality, t (18) = 4.61, $p < .001$; grammar and punctuation, t (18) = 2.46, $p < .024$; organization, t (18) = 5.76, $p < .001$; and forcefulness, t (18) = 3.38, $p < .003$. In addition, the positive review was rated higher in strength of the reviewer's attitude, although this difference was not statistically significant, t (18) = 1.58, $p < .131$.

This nonequivalence of the two reviews was further revealed in the intercorrelations of the rated variables. Each of the rating dimensions was positively and significantly correlated with ratings of the reviewer's attitude toward the book; the more positive the reviewer's attitude, the higher the quality ascribed to the review. These correlations for the five variables ranged from .40 to .79.

As expected, the two reviews were rated significantly differently in valence, t (18) = 32.95, $p < .001$. In fact, the distributions of valence ratings on the positive review (M = 38.36 on a 40-point scale) and the negative review (M = 2.33) were completely nonoverlapping.

The unexpected finding that the perceived quality of the positive review was higher than that of the negative review adds strength to the tentative conclusion drawn earlier. It appears that even when a positive evaluation is "objectively" more articulate than a negative one, observers might be biased toward seeing the negative evaluator as more intelligent and competent than the positive reviewer. Still, the results of Study 1 must be interpreted with caution. Since the positive review was rated more favorably in this post-test, it may be that the higher quality of the review accounted for the higher ratings of likeability awarded to the positive reviewer; thus, we do not have clear evidence from Study 1 of a general bias toward seeing positive evaluators as more likeable. In addition, it is possible that there were other differences between the two reviews that were not tapped by the dependent measure in the post-test, differences that might have been responsible for the higher intelligence ratings given to the negative reviewer.

In an effort to provide a more methodologically pure test of the hypothesis, Study 2 tested and used a set of "sanitized" book reviews, in which quality of writing was almost completely controlled. In addition, it included an investigation of possible order-of-presentation effects.

STUDY 2

Method

Materials

In an effort to produce negative and positive reviews that were as nearly

equivalent as possible, the negative review used in Study 1 was edited so that each negative word or phrase could be replaced by an antonym or negation, resulting in a positive version of the originally negative review. Likewise, the positive review was edited so that each positive word or phrase could be replaced by an antonym or negation, resulting in a negative version of the originally positive review. This procedure resulted in two different sets of negative and positive reviews, with the two reviews of a given set matched almost exactly:

Form A

For a novel with its sights steadfastly set so (low/high), "A Longer Dawn" by Alvin Harter is one of the more (unsuccessful/successful) novels I have come across in a long time. The characters are (neither/both) interesting (nor/and) engaging. Their story is told (without/with) reason, (without/with) logic, with (little/much) regard to time sequence (or/and) syntax. The book appears to have been written with (little/much) craft (or/and) care.

Form B

In 128 (uninspired/inspired) pages, Alvin Harter, with his first work of fiction, shows himself to be an extremely (incapable/capable) young American author. "A Longer Dawn" is a novella -- a prose poem, if you will -- of (negligible/tremendous) impact. It deals with elemental things: life, love and death, (but/and) does so with such (little/great) intensity that it achieves new (depths/heights) of (inferior/

superior) writing on every page.

Thus, it was expected that the two reviews of a given set would be perceived as being opposite in valence but equal in intensity and writing quality.

Pretest of the Reviews

In order to ascertain that the negative and positive reviews were essentially equivalent, 43 undergraduates at Brandeis University were asked to rate one of the four reviews on the same dimensions that had been used in the posttest for Study 1: reviewer's attitude toward the book, overall quality of writing in the review, grammar and punctuation, organization of thoughts, forcefulness of writing, and strength of the reviewer's attitude. The subjects were distributed across conditions as follows: 11 to Form A positive, 12 to Form A negative, 10 to Form B positive, and 10 to Form B negative.

These ratings were analyzed by a 2 x 2 analysis of variance (Form A or Form B x positive or negative). As expected, there were no significant main effects of review form or valence on any of the quality or strength variables, and no significant interactions. Indeed, the only statistically significant effect in all the analyses of variance was a significant main effect of valence on perceptions of the reviewer's attitude toward the book, F (1,37) = 1367.28, $p < .001$. As in Study 2, it was found that the distributions of ratings of the positive reviews (Form A, M = 36.18; Form B, M = 38.00) and the distributions of ratings for the negative reviews (Form A, M = 1.58; Form B, M = 1.00) were completely nonoverlapping. Further evidence that the positive and negative reviews were not differentiated in any of the quality ratings is provided by correlations between the rated variables: there were no significant correlations between reviewer's attitude and any of the other dependent measures.

Thus, the reviews formed by the editing process are not subject to any of the

methodological difficulties present in Study 1. The reviews are perceived as equally forceful and equally well-written. Moreover, as required for a test of the hypothesis, the positive and negative reviews are perceived as being equally extreme evaluations. Finally, the editing procedure provided two essentially equivalent sets of negative and positive reviews, thus providing two independent replications of the hypothesized phenomenon.

Subjects

Subjects were 100 male and female college undergraduates who were approached on the campus of Brandeis University and asked to participate in a study of impression formation. None of these subjects had participated in Study 1 or in the pretest for Study 2.[3]

Procedure

As in Study 1, only solitary students were asked to participate, and subjects were presented with a two-page questionnaire. The first page contained the same instructions as those that had been used in Study 1, along with one negative and one positive review drawn from the sets constructed by the editing process described earlier. Subjects read either Combination 1 (Form A positive, Form B negative) or Combination 2 (Form A negative, Form B positive), and they read either the positive or the negative review first. An equal number of subjects was randomly assigned to each of the four conditions.

The subjects were told that after carefully reading the reviews on page 1 they were to turn to page 2 and, using only this limited sample of writing, try to make accurate assessments of the reviewers. As in Study 1, subjects were asked to complete continuous rating scales for each reviewer on literary expertise, intelligence, competence as an editor, kindness, fairness, and likeability. In addition, subjects made ratings of the reviewers' writing ability and open-

mindedness.

Results and Discussion

Each subject-rated variable was analyzed by a 2 x 2 x 2 analysis of variance (Combination 1 or 2 x Order of presentation x Valence, with the latter being a within-subjects variable). On seven of the eight trait ratings, there was a significant main effect of valence of the review: literary expertise, F (1,96) = 20.76, $p < .001$; intelligence, F (1,96) = 20.71, $p < .001$, competence as an editor, F (1,96) = 5.20, $p < .025$, kindness, F (1,96) = 320.99, $p < .001$; fairness, F (1,95) = 43.60, $p < .001$; likeability, F (1,96) = 64.44, $p < .001$; and open-mindedness, F (1,96) = 33.86, $p < .001$. Means for each of these variables are presented in Table 2. It is evident from inspection of these means that, as in Study 1, the negative reviewer was seen as more intelligent and

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Insert Table 2 about here

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competent, with higher literary expertise than the positive reviewer. He was, however, also seen as significantly less fair, likeable, open-minded, and kind.

There were some effects of order of presentation on the trait ratings. In general, both reviewers were rated as more benevolent when the positive review was seen first. This primacy effect was exhibited in a main effect of order on ratings of kindness, F (1,96) = 25.37, $p < .001$; fairness, F (1,96) = 12.87, $p < .001$; and likeability, F (1,96) = 4.40, $p < .039$. There were also main effects of order on ratings of open-mindedness, F (1,96) = 9.50, $p < .003$ and competence, F (1,96) = 3.94, $p < .05$, such that the reviewers were rated as more open-minded and competent when the positive review was seen first. However, in both cases, this effect is qualified by a significant interaction between valence and order

(open-mindedness, F (1,96) = 4.44, $p < .038$; competence, F (1,96) = 9.09, $p < .003$); in fact, only the negative reviewer is rated as more open-minded and competent when the positive review is seen first than when the negative review is seen first.

In addition, both reviewers were rated as more open-minded when Combination 1 was used (Form A positive, Form B negative) than when Combination 2 was used (Form A negative, Form B positive), F (1,96) = 13.67, $p < .001$. Furthermore, the superiority enjoyed by the negative reviewer over the positive reviewer on ratings of literary expertise and writing ability was in fact only obtained under Combination 1; there was a significant valence by combination interaction on literary expertise, F (1,96) = 10.34, $p < .002$, and on writing ability, F (1,96) = 6.08, $p < .015$. Thus, despite the equivalence of the four reviews demonstrated in the pretest, it appears that the negative version of Form B may seem more "literary" when it is contrasted to the positive version of Form A. There were no other significant main effects or interactions on any of the rated variables.

It can be argued that the order effects and second-order interactions just described do not seriously qualify the major findings. The main effects of valence were strong on seven of the eight variables (excluding only writing ability), and in only one case is this main effect qualified by an interaction (the valence x combination interaction on literary expertise). For all other variables, the results are clear and strong: the negative reviewer is rated as more intelligent and competent than the positive reviewer, but less fair, likeable, open-minded, and kind. Finally, it is particularly important that on the main variable of interest for the present hypothesis, intelligence, there were no significant effects other than the main effect of valence.

General Discussion

Taken together, these studies provide strong evidence that, with at least some types of evaluations, negative evaluators are perceived as more intelligent but less kind than positive evaluators. This difference appears to hold when the content of the evaluations is tightly controlled, so that the only difference between positive and negative evaluations is their valence. Moreover, as demonstrated in Study 1, it even appears to hold when the content of the positive review is seen as of higher quality and the positive reviewer's position is seen as being more forcefully stated. There is no evidence of sex differences in subjects' tendency to display this bias, although there is some evidence that both evaluations will be seen as more kind when the positive evaluation is read first.

This research only partially replicates the findings of the Folkes and Sears (1977) study that examined the question, "Does everybody like a liker?". In that series of experiments, subjects rated stimulus persons who made like-dislike statements about several types of stimulus objects. In one experiment, for example, subjects rated stimulus persons who said, "I like him," or "I dislike him," in response to the names of 16 politicians. The percentage of like and dislike statements was varied to produce extremely negative stimulus persons, somewhat negative stimulus persons, somewhat positive stimulus persons, and very positive stimulus persons. The subjects rated each stimulus person on likeability and knowledgeability. In other experiments, instead of evaluating politicians, the stimulus persons evaluated cafeteria workers, movies, cities, and college courses.

The major finding of the Folkes and Sears experiments was replicated here: likeability was higher for positive evaluators than for negative evaluators.

However, in those studies, negative evaluators were not rated as more knowledgeable than positive evaluators. Instead, in ratings of most stimuli, positive evaluators were seen as most knowledgeable; in ratings of politicians, evaluators giving mixed positive and negative judgments were seen as most knowledgeable.

In their discussion of the knowledgeability ratings, Folkes and Sears speculate that a person who is generally positive about cities, movies, and so on, might be perceived as rather worldly and experienced; someone who likes many things must be familiar with many things and, therefore, should be viewed as a knowledgeable person. However, someone who is uniformly positive in evaluating various politicians might be perceived as rather naive, since different politicians often hold clearly opposite views. Indeed, Folkes and Sears combined ratings of how intelligent and how well-informed the stimulus persons were to obtain the overall knowledgeability scores. Thus, they suggest that, while mixed evaluations of politicians seemed most sensible to subjects, uniformly positive evaluations of noncompeting stimulus objects were taken as a sign of a broad range of experience.

It might be more useful, however, to view the subjects' task in these studies as one of applying inferential rules and causal schemata to make attributions about the evaluator's behavior (cf. Kelley, 1967; 1973). Viewed in this way, the task that Folkes and Sears presented to their subjects becomes an arena for the application of the covariation principle. The subjects hear a stimulus person make several like-dislike judgments about different stimulus objects; each of these may be considered a separate instance of behavior. Thus, strong dispositional attributions would be made about the consistently negative and consistently positive stimulus persons. The consistently negative evaluator would be viewed as something of a crank; he would be seen as quite disagreeable

and, because there is no substantive information on which to base a judgment of his intelligence, implicit personality theories or halo effects would lead to negative judgments in that domain, as well. By the same process, the consistently positive person would be seen as not only likeable but, by a halo effect, rather intelligent as well. Indeed, the only case in which subjects might feel they had sufficient information to make an intelligence judgment independently of their liking judgment would be in rating the evaluators of politicians. As Folkes and Sears suggest, most people probably view someone who enthusiastically approves of all politicians as somewhat naive -- especially in a cynical post-Watergate era.

By contrast, the covariation principle would not be used in the present studies, since subjects had only a single instance of behavior on which to base their judgments -- the review of a single book. Moreover, it can be argued that there is less opportunity for a halo effect to occur in the present studies than in the Folkes and Sears study. Those subjects had no substantive information on which to base ratings of intelligence; in a sense, their only recourse was to tie ratings of intelligence to ratings of likeability (except, perhaps, in rating the evaluators of politicians). By contrast, subjects in the present studies had paragraph-length discourses in which they could, presumably, discover abundant information to support their ratings of intelligence. Thus, it may be that people <u>are</u> prone to seen negative criticism as more intelligent, but only if they can gather evidence from the criticism itself (albeit in a biased fashion), and only if they are not convinced that the negative evaluator criticizes everything.

Indeed, the present studies may be taken as evidence for a kind of "reverse halo effect." As dubbed by Thorndike (1920) and investigated by several researchers since then (e.g., Nisbett & Wilson, 1977), the halo effect is the tendency

to see all positive characteristics as related. If the halo effect were operating in the present studies, it might be expected that either negative or positive reviewers would be seen as uniformly kind, open-minded, fair, intelligent, competent, and likeable. Clearly, though, this was not the case; the intellectual ratings were negatively correlated with the "benevolence" ratings. Reviewers were rated as either kind or intelligent, but not both. Halo effects, then, may be limited by the quantity of information available and the type of judgment being made.

If the present results cannot be explained by application of the covariation principle or the halo effect, what can account for the superiority of negative evaluators on intelligence ratings and the superiority of positive evaluators on likeability ratings? There are a number of explanations that might be offered. First, it might be proposed that, because negative descriptors are less frequent in written or spoken language, they are thought to be used primarily by well-educated, intelligent, and verbally facile individuals. This possibility was, however, ruled out by the pretesting that was done in Study 2; the reviews used in Study 2 were seen to be of equally high quality.

A second explanation centers on the salience of negative evaluations. There is ample evidence (cf. Matlin & Stang, 1978) that people are biased toward making positive evaluations. Thus, any negativity that is observed will most likely be seen as figural against a background of positivity. In addition, there is evidence that distinctive information may be perceived as more useful (Hamilton & Zanna, 1972; Jones & Davis, 1965). Accordingly, it might seem reasonable to assume that negative evaluations, because they are relatively rare, will be attended to more closely and regarded as more useful than positive evaluations. This could, conceivably, result in higher ratings for the negative

evaluations and their source. This explanation becomes less forceful, however, when we attempt to explain the lower kindness ratings given to the negative reviewer. There is nothing in this account that would specifically predict higher ratings only on intellectual traits.

There is an explanation, though, that can adequately account for the tendency to rate negative evaluators more highly on intelligence but less highly on kindness than positive evaluators; it is an explanation based on the notion of implicational schemata (Reeder & Brewer, 1979). This model proposes that observers make certain systematic assumptions about the behaviors implied by a particular disposition (for example, intelligence or kindness). These assumptions are called implicational schemata. A hierarchically restrictive schema represents a Guttman scaling of behaviors; in order for an individual with a given disposition to display one behavior, he must also be capable of performing behaviors that are lower in the hierarchy. Assumptions about intellectual ability would seem to follow a hierarchically restrictive schema. Specifically, observers might assume that, in order to find fault with an intellectual product (such as a book), an evaluator must be capable of producing <u>better</u> work or, at least, must know how such work should be done. Thus, such an evaluator would be seen as having a high degree of intelligence. Furthermore, it might be reasonable to assume that the same sort of schema applies to assumptions about kindness as well. If a positive evaluator is kind in evaluating something that is probably not very good (and there is some evidence from Study 1 that subjects believed the negative review to be more accurate), that evaluator must be consistently kind. It is this explanation, then, that appears to most adequately account for the present results.

These studies lend additional credence to the self-presentational explanation

for the negativity bias demonstrated in previous research (Amabile & Glazebrook, in press). In that research, it was found that subjects who occupied unstable positions within a group or who made their evaluations for a relatively high-status audience tended to be more negatively critical in their evaluations of others than subjects whose positions were secure or who had an equal-status audience. It was suggested that, as a self-presentational strategy, insecure subjects attempt to demonstrate their intelligence, and thereby maintain their self-esteem and their esteem in the eyes of others, by delivering negative evaluations. Prior to the research reported here, however, there was no evidence that it was indeed reasonable to use negativity as a self-presentational tactic. The present results suggest that, indeed, in at least some situations, negatively critical evaluations will impress observers as more intelligent. Interestingly, as demonstrated in Study 1, there is no indication that observers are at all aware of the negativity bias engendered by intellectual insecurity; subjects in that study did not rate the negative reviewer any lower than the positive reviewer on self-confidence or career success.

It is interesting to speculate on the extent to which this phenomenon of attributing higher intelligence to more negative evaluators is limited to evaluations of <u>intellectual</u> traits and products. Previous demonstrations of the negativity bias among intellectually insecure individuals (Amabile & Glazebrook, in press) have shown that the bias appears in ratings of intellectual qualities, but not in evaluations of social qualities -- even when subjects are explicitly instructed to judge stimulus persons' social abilities. It is possible, then, that subjects would not see a negative evaluator as more intelligent and competent if the substance of the evaluation were another person's social skills. This prediction would follow, of course, from the implicational schemata model;

intellectual acuity and social criticism would not even appear in the same hierarchy.

The tendency to see negative criticism as more intelligent than positive evaluation may be viewed as another in a rather long list of attributional errors and biases (cf. Ross, 1977). Certainly, there is no logical reason to attribute higher intelligence to negative evaluators; there is nothing inherently more intelligent in criticism than in praise, particularly in the highly controlled form in which criticism and praise appeared in these studies. However, this attributional bias might provide astute actors with a psycho-logical reason for using negative criticism. Although it appears that actors wishing to be liked (and, in some situations, to be thought more knowledgeable) should be generous in their praise, actors wishing to impress observers with their intellectual prowess should devise rather negative critiques of the intellectual work of others. In at least some situations, the choice for the impression manager may fall between two distinct impressions: "plodding but kind," and "brilliant but cruel."

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Footnotes

[1]A within-subjects design provides a better test of the hypothesis for this paradigm than a between-subjects design. It is important that subjects concentrate on characteristics of the reviewers that could account for the negative or positive reviews. In a between-subjects design, with subjects reading a single review of a book they have never heard of, they might easily attribute the valence of the review solely to characteristics of the book itself.

[2]For some subjects, the negative review was presented first. For others, the positive review was presented first. However, due to a procedural error, this counterbalancing was not nearly equal, making it impossible to include order of presentation as a factor in the analysis of this study. However, order of presentation was examined in Study 2.

[3]Although both males and females participated in this study, it was not possible to analyze the data for sex differences, since over half of the subjects failed to note their gender on the questionnaire. There is no reason, however, to expect that sex differences would have emerged, since there were no effects of sex in Study 1 (all F's < 1).

Table 1

Mean Ratings of Positive and Negative Reviewers, Study 1

Variable	Positive Reviewer	Negative Reviewer
Intelligence	24.51	27.69
Competence	22.85	25.94
Kindness	27.94	12.49
Fairness	23.62	16.31
Likeability	25.18	12.47

Note. Ratings were made on 40-point scales, with a higher number indicating more of the attribute. Means are combined across subject sex, since there were no sex differences.

Table 2

Mean Ratings of Positive and Negative Reviewers, Study 2

	Positive Reviewer		Negative Reviewer	
Variable	Order 1	Order 2	Order 1	Order 2
Literary Expertise	22.98	22.18	26.72	27.96
Intelligence	23.40	22.90	26.66	26.66
Competence	20.90	20.76	19.98	27.38
Kindness	29.22	31.92	8.32	13.90
Fairness	22.94	25.25	14.52	19.52
Likeability	25.88	19.18	12.80	15.94
Open-mindedness	24.26	25.22	13.16	20.02

Note. Ratings were made on 40-point scales. In Order 1, the negative review was seen first. In Order 2, the positive review was seen first. Ratings presented here were averaged across Combination 1 (Form A positive, Form B negative) and Combination 2 (Form A negative, Form B positive).